



MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, OCTOBER 27, 2022 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM
at Surrey Centre Library, University Blvd., Surrey

- **Attendees:** Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Ana Yancie Parada (Options), Melissa Osorto (Options), Valentina Stanciu, Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Chantel Spade (Kinbrace), Wilfred Thariki (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace), Jordan Bryan (IRB), Doug Peat (JHC), Barry Growe (JHC), Paige Levirs (MSDPR), Bianca Lomeda (MSDPR), Nora Maldonado (Red Cross), Ava Ariyan (SOS-ISSofBC), Shabnam Sadeqi (SOS-ISSofBC), Rawan Moon (VAST), Sidiqa (VAST), Pedro Ramirez (REACH Community Health), Naomi Morgan (Surrey Libraries), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Shiva Babu (Impact North Shore), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Nikita Laranjeira (MOSAIC), Geeta Bhardwaj (Abbotsford Community Services), Monika Isaac (Abbotsford Community Services), Diana Barry (Vancity), Gulalai Habib (Burnaby NH), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), Arely Rodriguez (LMNHS) Çağrı Koçyiğit (Rainbow Refugee), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Kay Sarai (YMCA), Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch), Fran Gallo, Jenny Moss (MAP).

Welcome from Surrey Centre Library - Naomi Morgan, Information services Librarian

Naomi welcomed MAP to the library space and noted that our work inspires learning more about refugees who are valuable in Surrey both as staff and readers. Surrey Libraries offer book-clubs, English language support, free tutoring, and many other services to all residents regardless of status. Surrey Libraries also values the partnership with MAP and supports its work.

MAP Co-Chair: Sireen El Nashar thanked Naomi for the library's hospitality and also the **Options** team of Ana, Melissa helped by Valentina who helped with the meeting set up.

As this was Sireen's first MAP meeting to chair she introduced herself more fully as ED of [Zaytuna Services Society](#) and looks forward to assisting refugee claimant serving agencies through MAP's network.

Sireen acknowledged that we were meeting on the **shared, unceded traditional territory of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen and other Coast Salish Peoples** and she also **acknowledged the generous funding from Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)** that makes MAP's work possible.

There were representatives from **21 MAP member agencies**.

Members introduced themselves and their agencies, and we welcomed the following new members:

- Bianca Lomeda – MSDPR – Community Integration specialist for Vancouver
- Nora Maldonado – Red Cross Detention Monitoring Team
- Chantel Spade – Kinbrace 'My Refugee Claim' project
- Ava Ariyan and Shabnam Sadeqi – settlement workers at SOS-ISSofBC
- Sidiqa – new volunteer at VAST
- Çağrı Koçyiğit – Inland Coordinator at Rainbow Refugee

And those by teleconference prevented from being with us: Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch), Fran Gallo and Barry Growe (JHC).

The **Agenda** was outlined, and the **September 22 Minutes** APPROVED

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **IRB Update – Jordan Bryan (IRB-RPD)**

Please note: the data in this report may not match exactly other reports due to data variances and extraction dates.

So far this year there are 2689 claims, 1704 of them principal applicants, with an address in British Columbia:

VABC Referrals (month)	Principal	Total including associates
Jan	97	149
Feb	99	143
Mar	147	219
Apr	126	205
May	158	282
Jun	180	283
Jul	195	337
Aug	215	339
Sep	272	403
Oct (partial, to Oct 19)	215	329
TOTAL	1704	2689

During the past calendar year (9+ months, 1Jan 2022 to 19 Oct 2022), the top countries of reference for referrals received with a VABC location code & British Columbia address were as follows:

VABC Referrals (country)	Principal	Total including associates
IRN	488	847
IND	269	356
MEX	195	329
COL	177	305
CHN	70	106
AFG	61	100
TUR	45	73
Other	399	573
TOTAL	1704	2689

Note: Top 5 countries have remained the same.

- The IRB has observed the increase in claims and is responding accordingly to keep up.
- The IRB would like to repeat the Announcement that all hearings can be heard in person if a special application is made. The following options are available:
 - a) All participants in the same room at the IRB.
 - b) If an individual needs assistance there are rooms at IRB that can be set up separate from the Hearing Room – that will create a hybrid hearing.

c) Default hearing – is all participants online.

- Jordan would like to hear from agency staff about refugee experiences with virtual hearings – please email Jordan at Jordan.Bryan@irb-cisr.gc.ca
- When claimants do not have equipment they can use for a virtual hearing, they can request a hybrid hearing. Their hearing will be virtual, but they will appear at the IRB office and use IRB equipment. To request a hybrid hearing, claimants should follow the instructions as written in the practice notice: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/procedures/Pages/pn-scheduling-virtual-hybrid-in-person-hearings.aspx>.

Questions

Do you have a reception desk for claimants' inquiries?

Response: inquiries are better served by calling and getting a call back with information.

What are expected timelines for hearings – average timeline?

Response: Jordan will report next month – there are multiple scenarios so she will check first.

Comment: refugee claimants are experiencing a lot of fear with the wait, so it would be helpful to have an idea

Response: Jordan acknowledged there is a long wait and much anxiety as it is an unknown process for claimants.

Sireen thanked Jordan for the report

- **MAP Advisory Council & Strategic Planning Update**

The Advisory Council met on October 19 and was grateful for the comments past along in the Minutes from MAP members regarding its constitution, format, and purpose. In light of these comments and others the following was decided:

a) The Council will not formally constitute itself until it is deemed necessary (if at all) by the Strategic Planning process. For example, there is no specific chair – the role will be rotated. The Council will wait to see what the strategic planning outcomes are before embarking on any formalities but will provide guidance to the MAP Executive where needed in this bridging time.

b) The Council will endeavor to involve those with lived experience whose voices need to be paramount in MAP's actions and messaging.

The Council recently approved the engagement of **Angie McLeod of HIP Consulting for the Strategic Planning exercise** to start promptly. At a meeting on October 31st the actual dates and processes will be decided on and communicated to MAP members who will be asked to participate actively soon after.

PRESENTATIONS

'New Initiatives'. Two presentations were made that described new resources for refugee claimants in the area of housing and legal information:

What should be done with all those empty buildings? The 'Meanwhile Spaces' initiative

Presented by: **Doug Peat, Housing and Donor Engagement Officer at Journey Home Community**

Doug also mentioned he is co-chair of MAP's Housing Working Group which always welcomes new

members concerned about housing refugee claimants.

In 2018 JHC and others hosted a [Housing Forum](#) with 60 community leaders, claimants and the sector. There was a sense of urgency then – but it has got much worse since then! - Every year MAP's settlement and housing agencies cannot find space for claimants – as a result many claimants end up using shelters but inevitably they leave as the experience is traumatic.

That is what caused Doug and others to ask: *What happens if you use empty spaces?*

Barry Growe joined the team and has been helping to **bring together developers with those who need housing**. There was a setback for the pandemic, but progress since has included:

- Vancouver Foundation provided funds along with a grant from SPARC BC for the work.
- Strong partnerships were formed for example with ISSofBC + MOSAIC
- A strong possibility was the conversion of a to be demolished seniors' facility and the partnership not only developed plans but also had BC Housing on board. However, at the last minute the BC Government rejected their application
- The [Reaching Home](#) program then provided funding for new projects:
 - * Wesgroup Properties – provided and they have since filled 5 X 1-bed units
 - * Concert Properties have provided 9 X2-bed units
- Goal: is to reach 35 units

At the same time **MOSAIC** procured some properties – Doug invited **Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)** to describe:

Marzieh – BC CHARMS had an article published in Landlord BC's 'Key' magazine with a story of a refugee trying to find housing ('Not Forgotten' initiative)

Having read the article a developer contacted MOSAIC – and offered to give them the use of some very large houses on Granville Street – with very low rents.

They are renovated and safe and secure – followed all the protocols, and the neighborhood is safe

This project started in June 2022 and is a new initiative for MOSAIC to offer transition housing – for this purpose they are hiring a Housing Coordinator

15 individuals already housed for 4 months after which they will move to permanent housing

Staff: Doug mentioned that JHC learned through experience to hire more staff to support the move out to permanent housing – so for staffing they have:

- wraparound service providers
- housing search workers
- supporters for long-term move out which is the harder part of the journey.

Shared two videos attached to these Minutes - they can be used by other agencies in similar projects.

Benefits to the development companies of providing temporary transitional housing to refugees:

- avoids empty building taxes
- keeps buildings tidy – doesn't offend neighbours
- keeps buildings occupied and vibrant
- companies are exempted from residential tenancy act and the by-laws of moving people on when they eventually develop

Important that we support companies in finding more ways to make this a possibility

Doug asked MAP members to help with links to developers – introductions for a meeting.

Questions:

It was mentioned that the project had included refugees other than claimants – but going forward are claimants the target group for this housing JHC has developed?

Response: Yes, it is meant specifically for claimants – if they are able to expand beyond 35 units then they may be able to include others as well as claimants.

Sireen thanked Doug for his interesting presentation

PRESENTATION 2: My Refugee Claim - a guide for refugee claimants in Canada

Chantel Spade/ Loren Balisky - Kinbrace

Sireen introduced Chantel and Loren:

Chantel Spade is Kinbrace's Refugee Protection Navigator. She coordinated the year-long My Refugee Claim project, bringing together experts (people with lived refugee claimant experience, frontline workers, lawyers, creatives) from across Canada to create MyRefugeeClaim.ca and the Orientation Booklet.

Loren Balisky is Kinbrace's Director of Engagement. He provided grant-writing and project design skills to ensure refugee claimants get discoverable and accessible resources in My Refugee Claim.

What is My Refuge Claim?

It includes a website (<https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/>) and an Orientation Booklet

(<https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/orientation-booklet/>) which has a high level review of the refugee claim process to help people be informed, stay connected and for agencies to support claimants along the way

Orientation booklet: 28-page booklet to help claimants orientate to process.

- Includes information, checklists, note taking areas, and it was designed to be useful and engaging.
- There are numerous QR codes to drive people to different resources
- 8 main buckets of information [Understand Canada's Refugee Protection System](#) - [Be Informed, Connected, and Prepared](#) - [Get Legal Representation](#) - [Start Your Refugee Claim](#) - [Prepare for Your Hearing](#) - [Attend Your Refugee Hearing](#) - [After Your hearing](#) - [If You Are Detained](#)
- Only in English right now – it will be translated into 12 languages once funding secured
- My Refugee Claim – is designed to help at the very start of process – downloadable as a PDF right now – you can print your own
- Kinbrace will have them at point of contact for claimants from the beginning (port of entry/IRCC etc.)
- A sample booklet was passed around

Ready Tours: the website was demonstrated <https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/ready-tours/> which is now inside My Refugee Claim

- Nobody owns this resource – it is shared by all and exists to assist claimants
 - IRB hosts the Ready Tours and provides a walk through the process
 - Masi (Kinbrace) is the colleague responsible for coordinating the Tours
- Procedure: Click on *Register Now* – there are different portals for refugee claimants and settlement workers wishing to attend.
Requirements: Claimants must have acknowledgement of claim and be living in Canada
- Ready Tours used to be regional as they were in person – now they are virtual and done nationally registering via language needed.
- Please refer claimants to the Ready Tour

My Refugee Claim Website: We explored the website – easily navigable – each section has sub-sections Chantel highlighted the regional nuances which exist because there are slight differences

- Explored the booklet – key contacts, QR codes
 - Community Resources – listed by provinces and cover settlement, health, housing, legal
- Chantel would like feedback as to what other resources to include

Questions:

Q: are all Ready Tours virtual?

Response: – yes

Q: Does website translate automatically?

Response: Google will do so – but they are planning to translate properly since legal terms need to be accurate.

Q: is funding for printing coming along?

Response: Work is in process as it is very expensive

Q: How's the national launch going?

Response: There are already 16 – 20 partners/groups across country

- 1100 users first week
- SEO optimization utilized
- Please link to your website

Q: I registered for RT as a settlement worker but haven't heard back?

Response: We are a bit behind because of all the changes – but will catch up!

Suggestion: Register with library catalogues – Surrey offered to do so

Kinbrace will also register My Refugee Claim with CBSA at airport and ports of entry, and IRCC inland – in a way it is replacing the excellent **First Contact** program that was run by Red Cross and then bc211

My Refugee Claim will also link with the BC CHARMS Navigation website <https://refugeeclaimbc.com/>

Sireen thanked Chantel and Loren for this wonderful resource.

BREAK: Members enjoyed the networking opportunity!

BC CHARMS Report – Nikita Laranjeira (BC CHARMS Co-ordinator)

Nikita introduced herself and reported:

Current process of referrals and assignments to vacancies are happening smoothly – thanks to support

According to **aggregate report**, 90% of clients connected, interviewed, and assigned to a vacancy within 10 days

Further data from the October aggregate report:

Individuals registered – 142

Families – 59

Most popular areas for housing search: Vancouver and Surrey, then Burnaby

BC CHARMS has placed 39 families and 14 individuals

Family composition: 40% couples without children

50% singles (men and women equally)

Currently there are 13 users with various degrees of utilization (some more active than others):

- Some require a refresher, some have not been active, but most recently more active than before and creating good client intake forms
- This is the rich data provided to government, funders etc. – so BC CHARMS needs the data to be as accurate as possible
- Government knows the statistics aren't complete – but we want to aim towards onboarding more agencies and that those onboarded use it continuously
- Some agencies are not using the intake forms – probably because there is little or no housing, but if they are not submitting a form, it doesn't help the claimants who then need to go to settlement agencies directly which is a duplication of the service, and their needs are not recorded in the database.

Waiting room

- Workflow to waiting room has now improved
- Going to set up a refresher for all users
- Once that is done BC CHARMS will go to BC211 and shelters to start training
- Everyone needs to be on top of the waiting room so that more claimants are registered for placement

Recent Successes

- Churches have begun referring clients to BC CHARMS
- Have submitted proposals for funding – haven't had any responses yet
- Working with Victoria Foundation blog post and Vital Signs – working to expand to Vancouver Island where there is a growing need.
- Social media – online BC CHARMS report book is being promoted via LinkedIn page

Screening procedures for potential landlords:

- Met with United Way to learn about their screening procedures for private landlords for CUAET arrivals
- Private landlords are contacting BC CHARMS and they will be onboarding once BC CHARMS has these procedures completed and approved by privacy/security consultants and safeguarding the needs of clients for access to legitimate and secure housing.

Questions to BC CHARMS:

- We hear from many claimants calling in directly to Kinbrace for housing. How do we add them to the BC CHARMS database?

Response: refer them to Navigation website – that will connect them

OR we can use *external referral form* to send them to the Waiting Room for attention.

- How much is BC CHARMS connecting with health providers and facilities like hospitals?

Response: Vancouver Coastal Health connection has been made - but hoping to expand to other hospitals

- How about referrals from shelters?

Response – we will be reaching out to shelters once the Waiting Room is improved so that settlement workers can connect with claimants in shelters needing housing.

- How long does it take to find housing?

Response - 90% find housing within first 10 days one way or another

Sireen thanked Nikita for the report.

MAP updates for Fall 2022: gathering meeting themes – Thanh Lam, MAP Co-chair

MAP Executive wants to make sure the information provided at MAP meetings is a) is correct and b) useful for everyone.

To that end we designed and sent out a survey to everyone on their preferred topics for 2022/23
9 agencies responded! Here are the results:

Suggested Topics under Themes: (= multiple requests)*

HOUSING (9 responses)

- * What's available, and what are some Innovative housing resources
- Reports from BC CHARMS
- How to help claimants transition – best practices
- Programs to provide emergency housing/shelter for claimants

SETTLEMENT (7 responses)

- * Employment (and recertification)
- More information about 'My Refugee Claim'
- Post secondary education opportunities
- Getting a Driving License

- * Multiple requests for more resources or new initiatives
- #### **HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH – 7 responses**
- in mental health services

- Link between mental health and impact on refugee claimant employment – intergenerational trauma
- Interim Federal Health (IFH) and billing question
- Language specific health services

LEGAL (6 responses)

- * Roles and updates from each agency: CBSA, IRCC, IRB
- Legal Aid representation
- PR application procedure for protected persons
- How to support refused refugee claimants and their families

Our meeting presentations will be inspired by these requests – thanks to those who responded, and we welcome other requests at any time.

Information WG Report: IN FOCUS events in November – Thanh Lam

MAP will be presenting: **In Focus – Seeking Asylum: Everything you thought you knew about Canadian Refugee Law (poster attached)**

The Information WG is aiming its public education at a grassroots level to again address the lack of information of how refugee claimants seek protection, how the law protects their rights to do so, and the challenges along the way.

We have decided to meet the public via community-based public libraries for low or no-tech discussions:

Tuesday Nov 8: Surrey Centre Library – targeting Surrey community

Speakers: Dennis Juarez (formerly of Options and MOSAIC, now working with the BC Metis nation)
Karen Jantzen (lawyer with Immigrant & Refugee Legal Clinic)
Ana Yansie Parada (settlement worker with Options)

**Monday Nov 28: Renfrew Library (Vancouver Public Library) – targeting the East Vancouver community
6:30 pm – 8pm**

Co-chairs will be moderating the events.

AGENCY UPDATES - what's happening at the agencies for refugee claimants

Rawan (VAST) – please refer clients [via the website](#) for mental health support

Getting Through It – weekly on Wednesdays from 10 – 12

Support to refugee claimants while going through the claim process

Pedro Rodriguez (Reach Community Health Centre, Commercial Drive) – accepts those in urgent situations in terms of health needs. Refugee claimants with no status can receive treatment in exchange for a small donation.

Clinic serves Grandview/Woodland area with full medical care – but for Urgent Primary Care they receive anyone including children.

Ana Yansie Parada: Options had a job fair last Saturday that connected many claimants to employers
Options is part of the team providing services to detainees at the IHC, and once released Options continues to support the same clients if they reach out afterwards

Ava Ariyan and Shabnam Sadeqi (SOS–ISSofBC) Surrey office has 2 new settlement workers who provide support, and a housing team of 3 working with BC CHARMS and all transition housing agencies.
The agency also provides many additional services.

Naomi Morgan (Surrey Libraries) – introducing the baby project – every Surrey family can get a package with a free book and other goodies. The library also has a literacy project, a Spanish speaking settlement worker – provides assistance to all regardless of immigration status.

Mohammed (Kinbrace Achieving Financial Mobility Project)

Collecting narratives about employers' experience in hiring refugee claimants – they are busy onboarding managers, and the settlement workers and claimants themselves promote the service.

Chantel Spade (Kinbrace My Refugee Claim) – old Ready Tour guide still available on the website as they are in multiple languages.

Thanh Lam – Mount Pleasant NH – for any refugee claimants in Mount Pleasant area we have a settlement and employment worker now.

Nora Maldonado (Canadian Red Cross) – introduced herself as the new Pacific Region Detention Monitoring Program Coordinator. Will be in touch with MAP BCIHC Support Program soon.

Kay Serai (YMCA) – looking at decreasing the barriers to using YMCA – if you have clients who don't have ID then a form can be provided for the settlement worker to formalize ID – and also financial help available.

Çağrı Koçyiğit (Rainbow Refugee) – if you know any LGBTQ claimants, please refer to Rainbow Refugee. They are also offering a new social engagement program – looking for those who might want to join.

Monika Isaac (Archway CS) – if you have clients who live in the Fraser Valley please refer them to Archway

Shiva Babu (Impact North Shore) – we have settlement, employment, mental health services for all on the North Shore.

Arely Rodriguez (Little Mountain NH) – LMNH is offering new programs for refugee claimants.

Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank) –the MFB can help with food donations for those with dietary restrictions.

They provide settlement assistance in Arabic, Farsi + Dari including help with filling forms.

Imtiaz Popat (Sehat program at Fraser Health) – expecting a multiple pandemic so practice prevention:

- don't shake hands and use sanitizer frequently

- get your 4th booster

There has been lots of resistance to vaccinations among Afghan community – please support with information when you meet your Afghan clients.

Feedback: feedback forms were completed and submitted to gather member opinions on the meeting.

CLOSING: Next meeting Thursday November 24 at ISSofBC, Victoria Drive, Vancouver